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Review of Young Meaning Makers Teaching Comprehension, Grades K-2

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Review of *Young meaning makers teaching comprehension, Grades K-2*.

Reutzel, D. R., Clark, S. K., Jones, C. D., & Gillam, S. L. (2016). *Young meaning makers teaching comprehension, Grades K-2*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Text comprehension is the heart of reading. Teachers must help young children with text comprehension as a critical part of the reading process. To help educators with this process, *Young Meaning Makers Teaching Comprehension, Grade K-2* (2016), written by D. Ray Reutzel, Sarah K. Clark, Cindy D. Jones, and Sandra L. Gillam is a useful text for understanding theoretical and practical components of text comprehension. The book will assist teachers who want to bring text to life in the classroom and engage young minds with the power of understanding. In my own personal pursuit to improve reading comprehension for my students, I found *Young Meaning Makers* to be an influential guide. *Young Meaning Makers* provides educators with exemplar lessons, a rationale for selecting standards and comprehension strategies for each lesson, and guiding questions for teachers to use to encourage classroom discussions around the text. The text claims to support teachers of any grade level, who want to encourage their students to “prepare for and participate in conversations and collaborations with diverse partners,” and “to be able to build on and express ideas with clarity” (p. 41), and does so with such enthusiasm and appreciation. *Young Meaning Makers* provides teachers with the reasoning behind why and how to engage students in close readings of text to deepen text comprehension in their students.

Reutzel et al. lay out the rationale for viewing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through the perspective of Kintsch’s Construction-Integration (CI) Model of Text

Comprehension (Kintsch, 1998). To clarify and support Kintsch's theory, Reutzel et al. compare Kintsch's CI Model to schema theory, an influential perspective on comprehension. Simply put, schema theory states that all knowledge is organized into units and stored information is within these units of knowledge (or schemata) (Anderson & Pearson, 1981). Schema theory emphasizes a reader's background knowledge in comprehending text. Extending on the concepts of schema theory, CI theory can support the context and sequence of the CCSS. Reutzel et al. list four advantages "for teachers' changing from comprehension instruction informed by schema theory to comprehension instruction informed by the CI model of Text Comprehension" (p. 22):

1. Schema theory and the CI Model share many similarities; however, the CI Model provides a more elaborate explanation of how readers are actually constructing meaning from a text.
2. The CI Model places the text and text processing as the focus of comprehension instruction. The text is used as the foundation to support multileveled comprehension processing.
3. The CI Model does not view comprehension as a single process; rather it represents text comprehension as a multileveled process, which relates to the sequenced CCSS Reading Anchor Standard clusters. This view of text comprehension as a multileveled process promotes a new framework for teaching comprehension in a way that develops students' abilities to engage text at multiple levels of comprehension processing (Reutzel et al., 2016, p. 22).
4. Instruction that fosters students' abilities to interact with text at multiple levels of comprehension processing, as represented in the CI Model, encourages teachers to select more than one standard for teaching comprehension of the single text.

Students are taught multiple comprehension strategies specifically selected “to respond to the text-processing demands encountered at each of the several levels of comprehension” (p. 23). For example, in the initial levels of text processing, students are taught a set of specific comprehension strategies, such as paraphrasing, sentence combining, etc, “to help them in the construction of a microstructure of text or what the text actually says” (p. 23).

In chapter 1, the RAND Reading study group (Snow, 2002) identified four elements of reading comprehension; the reader, the text, the purpose for reading, and the sociocultural context shaped by influences such as the reader’s home environment, peer groups, and relationships within a school setting. Before learning the skills of reading, young children’s narrative comprehension processes develop comparably with oral language skills. Reutzel, et al. (2016), stated, “The view that comprehension instruction should and can be taught effectively to students in the early grades differs dramatically from long-held view that decoding processes must be developed before comprehension processes” (p. 2). That is, decoding and comprehension are interwoven processes that are critical components of discussion and learning. Reutzel et al. describe how young readers can be taught to develop meaning from literature and informational texts using the CI Model. They share how teachers can properly select and implement the CCSS Reading Standards to partner with the processes of text comprehension described by Kintsch (2013). To assist teachers, the authors provide sample lessons showing how to use the CCSS Reading Standards to support students in processing texts. The take away from this chapter is that using the CI Model can impact how teachers support reading comprehension using the CCSS Reading Standards. Teachers need to reflect on why they should implement the

CI Model and what changes will occur as they implement this Model in comprehension instruction.

For the Speaking and Listening Standards, chapter 2 addresses using the CI model to build oral language to foster text comprehension, in which Reutzel et al. demonstrate the kinds of language skills that support comprehension of literature. These language support models naturally influence teachers to be reflective of how they teach their students to understand what they are reading. To assist teachers, Reutzel et al. (2016) include sample lessons modeling the discussion techniques using auxiliary inversion question forms intended to encourage higher-level language use and to build students' comprehension skills. The use of these language facilitation techniques is beneficial because it demonstrates how to create a classroom environment enriched in oral language acquisition and gives suggestions about how teachers can build oral language that supports the "construction-integration" text comprehension process. The language models help bring literature to life so that students recognize how their own lives and experiences connect to multiple texts they encounter. This also highlights the ways teachers can influence the power of oral language across the early primary grades to build a scaffold for supporting future reading comprehension.

Chapter 3 applies the CI Model to the CCSS in Reading Literature. Text selection for developing students' comprehension in CCSS Reading Anchor Standard 10 is given particular attention for assisting teachers in choosing the most appropriate text based on grade level. There are three examples of CI Theory of comprehension lessons for the CCSS for reading literature. The lessons are shown in one section of the three levels using CCSS ELA Literature Standards for each of the primary grades. Chapter 4 outlines the same three examples of CI Theory again for using CCSS Reading Standards for Informational Text. These chapters allowed me to think

about how I provide my students with the purpose and relevance in the texts we are reading in the classroom. As educators, we should bring texts to life for our students and introduce them to the wealth of knowledge in the world around them.

The final chapter of the book reflects on how the definition of comprehension has evolved over time and then discusses three ways comprehension has been assessed in the past. If the definition of comprehension has evolved over time, so should the ways teachers assess comprehension. There cannot be one format of assessment to determine whether scholars can fully comprehend a text. Teachers need to be reflective of how they will develop formative assessments to assess their students' levels of text comprehension processing. Educators can develop formative assessments and use this data to adjust or modify comprehension lessons to provide support for students who are having difficulty. Given this method of using assessment, educators can provide targeted comprehension instruction to better support students in their growth as confident readers.

The authors' purpose for writing this book is about how to teach and foster the development of text comprehension in grades K-2. Although the focus of this book is using the CI Model as a framework to teach reading comprehension in the earlier primary grades, any professional in the field of education will benefit from reading *Young Meaning Makers*. Teachers will walk away with the added ambition and determination of transforming themselves and their classrooms by bringing text to life through the use of a new model that provides clarity of the CCSS.

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